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SUBJECT: SE GRATION SEPTEMBER 12 VISIT TO EL FASHER

REF: A) KHARTOUM 507

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On September 12, SE Gration and delegation traveled to El Fasher, Darfur and visited two camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Abu Shouk camp residents told SE Gration that their security and humanitarian needs were not being met. North Darfur Wali (Governor) Osman Kibir presented SE Gration and delegation with attractively printed booklets that claimed that crime in Darfur was at a six-year low. At Zam Zam camp, Gration spoke with Relief International and World Food Program representatives, who said that they were adequately equipped to provide humanitarian services to the IDPs. International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) said that skirmishes and bombings continued, and echoed IDP concerns about security and government interference in their activities. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) On September 12, 2009, SE Gration and delegation traveled to Abu Shouk and Zam Zam IDP camps, both in the vicinity of El Fasher. SE Gration first met with 14 key leaders from Abu Shouk, Kassab, and As Salam IDP camps who expressed their frustration with the security situation, stating with UNAMID not doing an effective job in their eyes, security is the biggest need of Darfuris. These leaders, including three women, expressed their concerns over perceptions that SE Gration wants IDPs to return to their homes before they are ready. Mohamed Adam, a teacher and Omda in the Abu Shouk camp, stated that despite these concerns, "Still, we see you and the United States just after God for us. We need you to help us." SE Gration next visited IDPs in Abu Shouk camp. During two forums targeting various segments of the camp population, he heard similar concerns about security problems, gender-based violence, and humanitarian aid shortages. Camp residents asserted that all measurable indicators of IDP welfare had deteriorated substantially since the expulsion of thirteen international NGOs in March 2009. Residents of Abu Shouk mutually raised concerns about perceptions that SE Gration wanted forced returns of IDPs to their home villages, until he clarified that no one would be forced to return against his or her will, or before s/he was ready. This statement was received with loud applause. SE Gration assured camp residents that he had not said he wanted to lift sanctions on Khartoum, or to remove Sudan from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list. (NOTE: A number of Sudanese media outlets have recently reported that SE Gration intends to lift sanctions on Khartoum. END NOTE.) In his final stop at a women's development project run by the Darfur Peace and Development Organization in Abu Shouk, SE Gration observed a group of women weaving baskets to sell and sampled some rice prepared in a "solar cooker," a simple, affordable device that allows women to prepare traditional foods at home without taking the risk of collecting firewood outside the camp, which puts them at risk of rape.

13. (SBU) Following the visit to Abu Shouk, SE Gration paid a courtesy call on North Darfur Wali Osman Kibir. The Wali welcomed the delegation, and reiterated his desire to cooperate with the United States. The Wali painted a comparatively rosy picture of

North Darfur, describing enhanced security and humanitarian projects, and illustrated his points by passing out several copies of attractive colorful booklet, full of graphs and statistics that showed that North Darfur was enjoying a spectacular drop in crime and violence. The Wali assured the delegates that they would be allowed to travel freely during their visit, and he asked SE Gration to address an assembly of local National Congress Party (NCP) leaders taking place on the compound. SE Gration thanked the North Darfur Wali and delivered a few words to the crowd of NCP leaders, in which he called on them to use their influence to bring an end to the proxy war between Chad and Sudan.

14. (SBU) The delegation departed the Wali's compound and proceeded to the Zam Zam IDP camp, located twenty kilometers from Abu Shouk, a camp Gration last visited in April, 2009 (ref: A). At that time the camp was in upheaval due to the recent influx of 40,000 IDPs from the village of Muhajariyah and the nearly simultaneous expulsion of thirteen international NGOs from Darfur. SE Gration found the current situation in Zam Zam improved. Residents now have rudimentary shelter and water sources, as well as access to medical care and food rations. SE Gration spoke to Dr. Jamila Karimova, head of the Relief International clinic in Zam Zam, who told him that four clinics currently operating in Zam Zam serve a combined 1,000 patients per week. Dr. Karimova said that camp residents have adequate access to medical care but expressed her concerns that the hastily assembled camp had not been planned to accommodate basic sanitation needs. She also said that Relief International had been denied access to South Darfur. Dr. Karimova showed SE Gration the brick foundations for a new permanent clinic being built by Relief International. From the construction site, SE Gration and delegation walked to one of several new "water points" (public bore wells) dug in a joint project between the Government of Sudan and

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non-governmental organizations. SE Gration noted that on his last visit, the wells had not been there.

15. (SBU) At the final stop in Zam Zam camp, SE Gration visited a food distribution site run by the World Food Program (WFP). Leo VanderVelden, head of North Darfur's WFP office, told SE Gration that WFP currently feeds 1.5 million IDPs in Darfur, and that the distribution site in Zam Zam supplies food rations to approximately 100,000 camp residents. Residents receive twelve kilograms of food per month, mostly dry, unmilled grain. VanderVelden told SE Gration that rations are rarely stolen from the distribution center, since they are protected by a community watch organization. He said, however, that residents often sell a portion of their rations in the market to buy other necessities. He also said that residents hire millers residing within the camp to grind the grain rations for an in-kind fee of one third of the ration milled. WFP will start a voucher program in October that will compensate the millers but allow residents to keep all of their grain. SE Gration asked why WFP doesn't distribute pre-milled grain. VanderVelden answered that the millers themselves were IDPs and the WFP does not want to deny them their livelihood. Leaving the camp, the delegation convoy passed several small gardens in which camp residents were growing millet, albeit in very sparse quantities.

16. (SBU) Back in El Fasher, SE Gration visited an assembly of several dozen camp administrators from the UN and various International NGOs. The camp administrators stated that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) continue to bomb rebel strongholds in Darfur, and that rebels continue to skirmish between factions. Ute Kirsch, from Malteser International, told SE Gration that local security forces insisted that NGOs obtain permits to travel throughout Darfur, despite the fact that they were only officially required to "notify" the government of their travel plans. Several speakers at the assembly expressed concerns that the Sudanese government had failed to provide adequate security to aid workers, encouraging four cases of kidnapping and a rash of carjackings to occur. SE Gration warned the camp administrators that the coming elections and North-South issues might divert the attentions of advocacy groups away from Darfur. He added that we need to find a resolution to the conflict Darfur, including resolving the security situation, within the next three months if there is to be any chance of Darfur participating in the national elections. SE Gration

expressed his hope to see more sustainable development and job creation for the camp residents, so that IDPs could begin to live independently of UN assistance. He informed the camp administrators that he believed the Sudanese government is ready and willing to cooperate with the United States and NGO community to stabilize the situation in Darfur. However, he acknowledged that a great deal of time has elapsed since the beginning of the Darfur crisis, and said that with each passing day it becomes harder for IDPs to return to their old way of life.

17. (U) This cable was cleared by the Office of the Special Envoy.

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